



Bright Futures Patient Handout 15 to 17 Year Visits

Your Daily Life

- Visit the dentist at least twice a year.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day and floss once a day.
- Wear your mouth guard when playing sports.
- Protect your hearing at work, home, and concerts.
- Try to eat healthy foods.
 - 5 fruits and vegetables a day
 - 3 cups of low-fat milk, yogurt, or cheese
- Eating breakfast is very important.
- Drink plenty of water. Choose water instead of soda.
- Eat with your family often.
- Aim for 1 hour of vigorous physical activity every day.
- Try to limit watching TV, playing video games, or playing on the computer to 2 hours a day (outside of homework time).
- Be proud of yourself when you do something good.

PHYSICAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Healthy Behavior Choices

- Talk with your parents about your values and expectations for drinking, drug use, tobacco use, driving, and sex.
- Talk with your parents when you need support or help in making healthy decisions about sex.
- Find safe activities at school and in the community.
- Make healthy decisions about sex, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- Follow your family's rules.

RISK REDUCTION

Violence and Injuries

- Do not drink and drive or ride in a vehicle with someone who has been using drugs or alcohol.
 - If you feel unsafe driving or riding with someone, call someone you trust to drive you.
- Support friends who choose not to use tobacco, alcohol, drugs, steroids, or diet pills.
- Insist that seat belts be used by everyone.
- Always be a safe and cautious driver.
 - Limit the number of friends in the car, nighttime driving, and distractions.
- Never allow physical harm of yourself or others at home or school.
- Learn how to deal with conflict without using violence.
- Understand that healthy dating relationships are built on respect and that saying "no" is OK.
- Fighting and carrying weapons can be dangerous.

VIOLENCE AND INJURY PREVENTION

Your Feelings

- Talk with your parents about your hopes and concerns.
- Figure out healthy ways to deal with stress.
- Look for ways you can help out at home.
- Develop ways to solve problems and make good decisions.
- It's important for you to have accurate information about sexuality, your physical development, and your sexual feelings. Please ask me if you have any questions.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

School and Friends

- Set high goals for yourself in school, your future, and other activities.
- Read often.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Find new activities you enjoy.
- Consider volunteering and helping others in the community with an issue that interests or concerns you.
- Be a part of positive after-school activities and sports.
- Form healthy friendships and find fun, safe things to do with friends.
- Spend time with your family and help at home.
- Take responsibility for getting your homework done and getting to school or work on time.

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC COMPETENCE



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Tips for Parents of Adolescents



Adolescence is a time of change and challenge for your preteen or teenager. The changes that occur during adolescence are often confusing not only for your son or daughter, but for you as well. Though these years can be difficult, the reward is watching your child become an independent, caring, and responsible adult. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers the following tips to help you face the challenges of your child's adolescence:

1. **Spend family time with your adolescent.** Although many preteens and teens may seem more interested in friends, this does not mean they are not interested in family.
2. **Spend time alone with your adolescent.** Even if your teen does not want time alone with you, take a moment here and there to remind him that your "door is always open," and you are always there if he needs to talk. Remind him often.
3. **When your adolescent talks**
 - Pay attention.
 - Watch, as well as listen.
 - Try not to interrupt.
 - Ask him to explain things further if you don't understand.
 - If you don't have time to listen when your child wants to talk, set a time that will be good for both of you.
4. **Respect your adolescent's feelings.** It's okay to disagree with your child, but disagree respectfully, not insultingly. Don't dismiss her feelings or opinions as silly or senseless. You may not always be able to help when your child is upset about something, but it is important to say, "I want to understand" or "Help me understand."
5. **When rules are needed, set and enforce them.** Don't be afraid to be unpopular for a day or two. Believe it or not, adolescents see setting limits as a form of caring.
6. **Try not to get upset if your adolescent makes mistakes.** This will help him take responsibility for his own actions. Remember to offer guidance when necessary. Direct the discussion toward solutions.

"I get upset when I find clothes all over the floor,"

is much better than, *"You're a slob."*

Be willing to negotiate and compromise. This will teach problem solving in a healthy way. Remember to choose your battles. Some little annoying things that adolescents do may not be worth a big fight — let them go.

7. **Criticize a behavior, not an attitude.**

For example, instead of saying,

"You're late. That's so irresponsible."

"And I don't like your attitude,"

try saying,

"I worry about your safety when you're late. I trust you, but when I don't hear from you and don't know where you are, I wonder whether something bad has happened to you. What can we do together to help you get home on time and make sure I know where you are or when you're going to be late?"

8. **Mix criticism with praise.** While your teen needs to know how you feel when she is not doing what you want her to do, she also needs to know that you appreciate the positive things she *is* doing. For example,

"I'm proud that you are able to hold a job and get your homework done. I would like to see you use some of that energy to help do the dishes after meals."

9. **Let your child be the adolescent he wants to be,** not the one you wish he was. Also, try not to pressure your adolescent to be like you were or wish you had been at that age. Give your teen some leeway with regard to clothes, hairstyle, etc. Many teens go through a rebellious period in which they want to express themselves in ways that are different from their parents. However, be aware of the messages and ratings of the music, movies, and video games to which your child is exposed.
10. **Be a parent first, not a pal.** Your adolescent's separation from you as a parent is a normal part of development. Don't take it personally.
11. **Don't be afraid to share with your adolescent that you have made mistakes** as a parent. A few parenting mistakes are not crucial. Also, try to share with your teen mistakes you made as an adolescent.
12. **Talk to your pediatrician** if you are having trouble with your adolescent. He or she may be able to help you and your child find ways to get along.

The following is additional information you may find helpful in understanding some of the life changes and pressures your adolescent may be experiencing.

Dieting and body image

"My daughter is always trying new diets. How can I help her lose weight safely?"

We live in a society that is focused on thinness. Adolescents see many role models in fashion magazines, on television, and in the movies that emphasize the importance of being thin. This concern about weight and body image leads many adolescents, especially girls, to resort to extreme measures to lose weight. Be aware of any diet or exercise program with which your child is involved. Be watchful of how much weight your child loses, and make sure the diet program is healthy. Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can be very dangerous. If you suspect your child has an eating disorder, talk to your pediatrician right away.

Nutrition

The growth rate during adolescence is one of the most dramatic changes the body ever goes through. It is very important for your adolescent to have a proper diet. Follow these suggestions to help keep your teen's diet a healthy one.

- Limit fast food meals. Discuss the options available at fast food restaurants, and help your teen find a good balance in her diet. Fat should not come from junk food but from healthier foods such as cheese or yogurt. Vegetables and fruit are also important.
- Keep the household supply of "junk food" such as candy, cookies, and potato chips to a minimum.
- Stock up on low-fat healthy items for snacking such as fruit, raw vegetables, whole-grain crackers, and yogurt.
- Check with your pediatrician about the proper amounts of calories, fat, protein, and carbohydrates for your child.
- As a parent, model good eating habits.

Many diets are unhealthy for adolescents because they do not have the nutritional value that bodies need during puberty. If your teen wants to lose weight, urge her to increase physical activity and to take weight off slowly. Let her eat according to her own appetite, but make sure she gets enough fats, carbohydrates, protein, and calcium.

Make sure your teen is not confusing a "low-fat" diet with a "no fat" diet. Teens need 30% of their calories from fat, and cutting fat out of the diet altogether is not healthy. A low-fat diet should still include 30 to 50 grams of fat daily. Many teens choose vegetarian diets. If your child decides to become a vegetarian, make certain she reads about it and becomes an educated vegetarian. She may need to see her pediatrician or a nutritionist to ensure that she is getting enough fat, calories, protein, and calcium.

Many adolescents are uncomfortable with their bodies. If your adolescent is unhappy with the way she looks, encourage her to start a physical activity program. Physical activity will stop hunger pangs, create a positive self-image, and take away the "blahs". Unfortunately, some teens may try to change their bodies by dangerous means such as unhealthy dieting (as discussed previously) or with drugs such as anabolic steroids. Encourage healthy exercise. If your child wants to train with weights, she should check with her pediatrician, as well as a trainer, coach, or physical education teacher. Help create a positive self-image by praising your child about her appearance. Set a good example by practicing what you preach. Make exercise and eating right a part of your daily routine also.

Dating and sex education

"With all the sex on television, how can I teach my son to 'wait' until he is ready?"

There are constant pressures for your adolescent to have sex. These pressures may come from the movies, television, music, friends, and peers. Teens are naturally curious about sex. This is completely normal and healthy. Talk to your adolescent to understand his feelings and views about sex. Start early and provide your teen with access to information that is accurate and appropriate. Delaying sexual involvement could be the most important decision your child can make. Talk to your teen or preteen about the following things he needs to think about before becoming sexually active:

Medical and physical risks, like unwanted pregnancy and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) such as

- Gonorrhea
- Chlamydia
- Hepatitis B
- Syphilis
- Herpes
- HIV, the virus that causes AIDS

Emotional risks that go along with an adolescent having sex before he is ready. The adolescent may regret the decision when he is older or feel guilty, frightened, or ashamed from the experience. Have your adolescent ask himself, "Am I ready to have sex?" "What will happen after I have sex?"

Methods of contraception — Anyone who is sexually active needs to be aware of the various methods of contraception that help prevent unintended pregnancies, as well as ways to protect against sexually transmitted diseases. Remember to tell your teen that latex condoms should always be used *along with* a second method of contraception to prevent pregnancy and STDs.

Setting limits — Make sure your adolescent has thought about what his limits are *before* dating begins.

Most importantly, let your adolescent know that he can talk to you and his pediatrician about dating and relationships. Offer your guidance throughout this important stage in your teen's life.

Smoking and tobacco

"My daughter smokes behind my back. How do I convince her to quit?"

Smoking can turn into a lifelong addiction that can be extremely hard to break. Discuss with your adolescent some of the more undesirable effects of smoking, including bad breath, stained teeth, wrinkles, a long-term cough, and decreased athletic performance. Addiction can also lead to serious health problems like emphysema and cancer.

"Chew" or "snuff" can also lead to nicotine addiction and causes the same health problems as smoking cigarettes. Mouth wounds or sores also form and may not heal easily. Smokeless tobacco can also lead to cancer.

If you suspect your teen or preteen is smoking or using smokeless tobacco, talk to your pediatrician. Arrange for your child to visit the pediatrician, who will want to discuss the risks associated with smoking and the best ways to quit before it becomes a lifelong habit. Smokers young and old often are more likely to listen to advice from their doctor than from others.

If you smoke...quit

If you or someone else in the household smokes, now is a good time to quit. Watching a parent struggle through the process of quitting can be a powerful message for a teen or preteen who is thinking about starting. It also shows that you care about your health, as well as your child's.

Alcohol

"I know my son drinks once in a while, but it's just beer. Why should I worry?"

Alcohol is the most socially accepted drug in our society, and also one of the most abused and destructive. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair judgment, provoke risky and violent behavior, and slow down reaction time. An intoxicated teenager (or anyone else) behind the wheel of a car is a lethal weapon. Alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of death for young adults, aged 15 to 24 years.

Though it's illegal for people under age 21 to drink, we all know that most teenagers are no strangers to alcohol. Many of them are introduced to alcohol during childhood. If you choose to use alcohol in your home, be aware of the example you set for your teen. The following suggestions may help:

- Having a drink should never be shown as a way to cope with problems.
- Don't drink in unsafe conditions — driving the car, mowing the lawn, using the stove, etc.
- Don't encourage your child to drink or to join you in having a drink.
- Never make jokes about getting drunk; make sure that your children understand that it is neither funny nor acceptable.
- Show your children that there are many ways to have fun without alcohol. Happy occasions and special events don't have to include drinking.
- Do not allow your children to drink alcohol before they reach the legal age and teach them never, ever to drink and drive.
- Always wear your seatbelt (and ask your children to do the same.)

Drugs

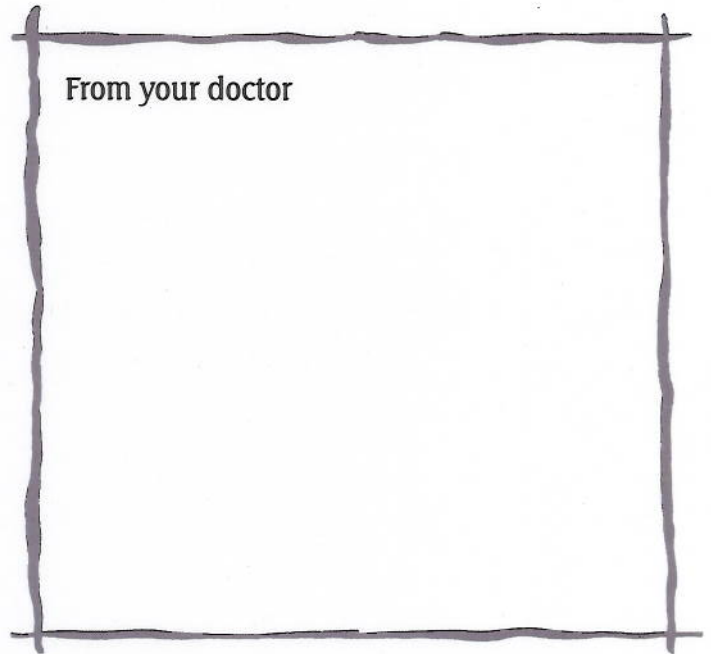
"I am afraid some of my daughter's friends have offered her drugs. How can I help her make the right decision?"

Your child may be interested in using drugs other than tobacco and alcohol, including marijuana and cocaine, to fit in or as a way to deal with the pressures of adolescence. Try to help your adolescent build her self-confidence or self-esteem. This will help your child resist the pressure to use drugs. Encourage your adolescent to "vent" emotions and troubles through conversations and physical activity rather than by getting "high."

Set examples at home. Encourage your adolescent to participate in leisure and outside activities to stay away from the peer pressure of drinking and drugs. Talk with your children about healthy choices.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor



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Pediatrician Implementation Guide

PARENT-TEEN DRIVING AGREEMENT AND A MESSAGE TO PARENTS OF TEEN DRIVERS

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 16- to 20-year-olds, accounting for about 5,500 fatalities annually and injuring thousands more. A variety of legislative measures—graduated driver licensing (GDL), minimum drinking-age and drunk-driving laws, and improved seat belt laws—are saving teens' lives, but much work remains to be done, particularly in improving the way parents handle the issue of teen driving. Parents are too often unaware of their teens' risky driving habits and while parents do place restrictions on their teens' driving, they are often not the restrictions with proven safety benefits such as prohibitions on nighttime driving and limits on the number of teen passengers.

Pediatricians can be valuable partners in helping families address this important health topic. Pediatricians can educate parents and teens about the dangers of teen driving and ways to enhance safety, facilitate communication between the parent and teen about driving, and help parents establish useful restrictions and logical consequences as their teens begin to drive.

The Parent-Teen Driving Agreement is a useful tool for pediatricians to use in practice as part of their counseling on teen driving. Although there is not yet sufficient evidence that such an agreement improves driver safety or decreases violations and crashes, it may result in better communication, more restrictions, and safer parent and teen attitudes.

Tips on Using the Parent-Teen Driving Agreement and A Message to Parents of Teen Drivers in Your Practice

- Use these tools as part of your counseling. Explain that while your state has a GDL law, parents still have a crucial role to play in keeping their teens safe on the road.
- Help parents understand that while it is important to know where their teens are going and when they will be home, the most important restrictions they can set are on nighttime driving and the number of teen passengers.
- Remind parents that wearing a seat belt is the best defense against injury or death in a crash. Teens should *never* drive or ride in a car unbuckled, and parents need to set a positive example by always buckling up themselves.
- Because the majority of night crashes occur before midnight, the night curfew should initially be set at 9:00 pm.

- Because the highest risk of a crash is in the first 6 months of unsupervised driving, teens should not have passengers until they have had extensive on-road driving experience. You may want to mention that 1 passenger increases the risk of a crash by 40%, 2 passengers doubles the risk, and 3 passengers quadruples the risk.
- Talk with parents about the dangers of expecting their newly licensed teen drivers to give rides to younger siblings.
- Talk with parents about their important role in supervising their teens' driving practice. Mention that many parents view this as a rare chance to spend time alone with their teens. Explain that extensive supervised practice is critically important. Some states now require as much as 50 hours of on-road practice (5–10 hours at night) before a teen can get a provisional license.
- Use this as an opportunity to help parents and teens negotiate their changing relationship and develop new communication strategies that allow teens to grow more independent while parents appropriately supervise and monitor their teens' activities to keep them safe. If parents are concerned about their teens' maturity and ability to handle the responsibilities of driving, you can advise that states allow parents to prevent teens from getting a permit or license.

Tips on Helping Families Complete the Parent-Teen Driving Agreement

- Discuss the agreement and teens' driving with families several months before teens are eligible for a learner's permit. The agreement is not a static document. As teens gain more experience and prove themselves to be responsible, safe drivers, restrictions should *gradually* be relaxed (but should always, at a *minimum*, follow the GDL requirements for the state). Families should revisit the agreement frequently as part of ongoing communication about teen driving.
- Help parents and teens understand that certain restrictions are nonnegotiable (eg, no driving without a seat belt, no drinking and driving), while other restrictions can be relaxed over time (eg, nighttime driving, teen passengers). Help parents and teens agree to consequences that are commensurate with the severity of the violation.
- Suggest that parents discuss the teens' responsibility to help with some of the costs of driving (eg, insurance, gas, maintenance).



A Message to Parents of Teen Drivers

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teens and young adults. More than 5,500 young people die every year in car crashes and thousands more are injured. Parents can play an important role in reducing these numbers and keeping their teens alive.

The following are ways you can help keep teens safe on the road:

- **Be a role model.** If you expect your teen to drive safely, you need to drive safely, too.
 - Always wear your seat belt.
 - Don't drink and drive. Never allow any alcohol or illegal drugs in the car.
 - Don't eat, drink, talk on your cell phone, or do anything else that could distract you from your driving.
 - Stay within the speed limit and obey all traffic signals.
- **Know the laws in your state.** It is important that you know and understand the graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws where you live. Specifically, you need to know the restrictions and limitations on teen drivers who have permits and provisional licenses. You must also learn about your own legal responsibilities for providing a good supervised driving experience for your teen.
- **Set specific rules.** Before you let your teen drive, set specific rules that must be followed (see Parent-Teen Driving Agreement handout).
 - At first, the restrictions you set should be strict. You can gradually relax the rules after your teen has demonstrated safe driving. And the rules you set should depend on the maturity level of your teen.
 - Because so many crashes occur in the first 6 months of unsupervised driving, your teen shouldn't drive teen passengers or drive after 9:00 pm at first. And don't ask your teen to give rides to younger siblings until he or she has had extensive driving experience.
 - After your teen has demonstrated safe driving for 6 months, you might allow 1 passenger and a later curfew (for example, 10:00 pm). Before allowing more passengers, keep in mind that more passengers may make it more likely that your teen will have a crash. Studies show that 1 passenger increases the risk of a crash by 40%, 2 passengers doubles the risk, and 3 passengers almost quadruples the risk.
- **Enforce strict penalties.** Generally, penalties for breaking the contract should match the seriousness of the rule broken. Punishments for reckless driving, such as speeding or drunk driving, should be strict and may involve loss of driving privileges.
- **Take your teen on the road.** The 6 hours of driving practice in many driver education programs is not enough. Your teen needs a lot more supervised driving practice, and some nighttime driving is important, too.

Some states require 50 hours of supervised practice. There are books, videos, and classes for parents on how to teach teen drivers. Remember that you'll probably need a lot of patience.

- **Check out the car.** Make sure the car your teen is driving is safe and in good condition. If your teen is buying a car, help your teen research safety ratings and find a mechanic to inspect the car. Air bags and lap-shoulder belts in the rear seat are important safety features.
- **Make a tough decision.** If you're concerned that your teen may not be ready to drive, you can prevent your teen from getting a license. All states allow parents to block their teen from getting a license if the teen is thought to be immature or reckless.

For more information

American Academy of Pediatrics

www.aap.org

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

www.aaafoundation.org

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

www.nhtsa.gov

National Safety Council

www.nsc.org

Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

www.trafficsafety.org

Please note: Inclusion on this list does not imply an endorsement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP is not responsible for the content of the resources mentioned in this publication. Web site addresses are as current as possible, but may change at any time.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician and allergist. There may be variations in treatment that your physician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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Parent-Teen Driving Agreement

I, _____, will drive carefully and cautiously and will be courteous to other drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians at all times.

I promise that I will obey all the rules of the road.

- Always wear a seat belt and make all my passengers buckle up.
- Obey all traffic lights, stop signs, other street signs, and road markings.
- Stay within the speed limit and drive safely.
- Never use the car to race or to try to impress others.
- Never give rides to hitchhikers.

I promise that I will make sure I can stay focused on driving.

- Drive with both hands on the wheel.
- Never eat, drink, or use a cell phone while I drive.
- Drive only when I am alert and in emotional control.
- Call my parents for a ride home if I am impaired in any way that interferes with my ability to drive safely.

I promise that I will respect laws about drugs and alcohol.

- Drive only when I am alcohol and drug free.
- Never allow any alcohol or illegal drugs in the car.
- Be a passenger only with drivers who are alcohol and drug free.

I promise that I will be a responsible driver.

- Drive only when I have permission to use the car and I will not let anyone else drive the car unless I have permission.
- Drive someone else's car only if I have parental permission.
- Pay for all traffic citations or parking tickets.
- Complete my family responsibilities and maintain good grades at school as listed here: _____
- Contribute to the costs of gasoline, maintenance, and insurance as listed here: _____

I agree to the following restrictions, but understand that these restrictions will be modified by my parents as I get more driving experience and demonstrate that I am a responsible driver.

For the next _____ months, I will not drive after _____ pm.

For the next _____ months, I will not transport more than _____ teen passengers (unless I am supervised by a responsible adult).

For the next _____ months, I won't adjust the stereo or air conditioning/heater while the car is moving.

For the next _____ months, I will not drive in bad weather.

I understand that I am not permitted to drive to off-limit locations or on roads and highways as listed here: _____

I agree to follow all the rules and restrictions in this contract. I understand that my parents will impose penalties (see below), including removal of my driving privileges, if I violate the contract. I also understand that my parents will allow me greater driving privileges as I become more experienced and as I demonstrate that I am always a safe and responsible driver.

Penalties for contract violations

Drove after drinking alcohol or using drugs

No driving for _____ months.

Got ticket for speeding or moving violation

No driving for _____ months.

Drove after night driving curfew

No driving for _____ weeks/months.

Drove too many passengers

No driving for _____ weeks/months.

Broke promise about seat belts (self and others)

No driving for _____ weeks/months.

Drove on a road or to an area that is off-limits

No driving for _____ weeks/months.

Signatures

Driver _____ Date _____

Parent promise: I also agree to drive safely and to be an excellent role model.

Parent (or guardian) _____ Date _____

Parent (or guardian) _____ Date _____

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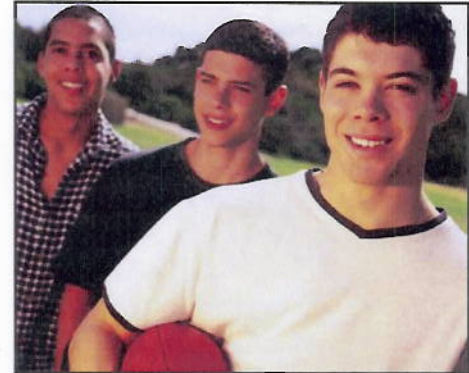
Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development



Middle Adolescence (15 - 17 years old)

Developmental Milestones

Middle adolescence is a time of physical, mental, cognitive, and sexual changes for your teenager. Most girls will be physically mature by now, and most will have completed puberty. Boys might still be maturing physically during this time. Your teenager might have concerns about her body size, shape, or weight. Eating disorders can also be common, especially among females. During this phase of development, your teenager is developing his unique personality and opinions. Peer relationships are still important, yet your teenager will have other interests as he develops a more clear sense of identity. Middle adolescence is also an important time to prepare for more independence and responsibility; many teenagers start working, and many will be leaving home soon after high school.



Other changes you might notice in your teenager include:

Emotional/Social Changes

- Increased interest in the opposite sex
- Decreased conflict with parents
- Increased independence from parents
- Deeper capacity for caring and sharing and the development of more intimate relationships
- Decreased time spent with parents and more time spent with peers

Mental/Cognitive Changes

- More defined work habits
- More concern about future educational and vocational plans
- Greater ability to sense right and wrong
- Sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades at school, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, thoughts of suicide, and other problems (Note: Problems at school, alcohol and drug use, and other disorders can also lead to feelings of sadness or hopelessness.)

(Adapted with permission from Bright Futures: Green M, Palfrey JS, editors. Bright Futures Family Tip Sheets: Early Adolescence. Arlington (VA): National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 2001. Other sources: American Academy of Child and Family Psychiatry and the American Academy of Pediatrics)

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Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development

- Talk to your teenager about her concerns and pay attention to any changes in her behavior. Ask her if she has had suicidal thoughts, particularly if she seems sad or depressed. Asking about suicidal thoughts will not cause her to have these thoughts, but it will let her know that you care about how she feels. Seek professional help if necessary.
- Show interest in your teenager's school and extracurricular interests and activities and encourage him to become involved in activities such as sports, music, theater, and art.
- Compliment your teenager and celebrate her efforts and accomplishments.
- Show affection for your teenager. Spend time together doing things you enjoy.
- Respect your teenager's opinion. Listen to him without playing down his concerns.
- Encourage your teenager to volunteer and become involved in civic activities in her community.
- Encourage your teenager to develop solutions to problems or conflicts. Help your teenager learn to make good decisions. Create opportunities for him to use his own judgment, and be available for advice and support.
- If your teenager engages in interactive Internet media such as games, chat rooms, and instant messaging, encourage him to be disciplined and respectful about the amount of time she is involved with it.
- If your teenager works, use the opportunity to talk about expectations, responsibility, and other aspects of behaving respectfully in a public setting.
- Talk with your teenager and help him plan ahead for difficult or uncomfortable situations. Discuss what he can do if he is in a group and someone is using drugs, under pressure to have sex, or offered a ride from someone who has been drinking.
- Respect your teenager's need for privacy.
- Encourage your teenager to get enough sleep and exercise, and to eat healthy, balanced meals.
- Encourage your teenager to have meals with the family. Eating together will help your teenager make better choices about the foods she eats, promote healthy weight, and give family members time to talk with each other. In addition, a teenager who eats meals with the family is more likely to have better grades and less likely to smoke, drink, or use drugs. She is also less likely to get into fights, think about suicide, or engage in sexual activity.

Safety First

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death from unintentional injury among teenagers, yet few teenagers take measures to reduce their risk of injury. Unintentional injuries resulting from participation in sports and other activities are also common.

- Talk with your teenager about the importance of wearing a seatbelt while driving. Insist that she obey speed limits and traffic lights, and strongly advise her not to drink and drive. Set clear rules for when and where she can use the car, and who can ride with her.
- Encourage your teenager to wear a helmet when riding a bike, motorcycle, or all-terrain vehicle.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth 15 through 24 years of age. Talk with your teenager about suicide and pay attention to warning signs.

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- Talk with your teenager about the dangers of drugs, drinking, smoking, and risky sexual activity. Ask him what he knows and thinks about these issues, and share with him your feelings. Listen to what he says and answer his questions honestly and directly.
- Discuss with your teenager the importance of choosing friends who do not act in dangerous or unhealthy ways.
- Know where your teenager is and whether an adult is present. Make plans with her for when she will call you, where you can find her, and what time you expect her home.

Links For Parents

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has brochures, fact sheets, and other information on various health topics for parents with children of all ages.

[CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health has a Healthy Youth!](#) webpage that addresses six critical types of adolescent health behavior that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among adults and youth. The website's A to Z list addresses other issues that affect children and adolescents.

The [National Center on Injury Prevention and Control](#) at CDC has a website that contains information like youth violence, suicide, teen drivers, sexual violence, and other injury-related topics.

[KidsHealth](#) by the Nemours Foundation has practical information for parents, teens, and kids.

The [American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#) has [fact sheets](#) for parents on various issues related to child and adolescent development.

[Talk With Your Kids](#) is a national initiative by [Children Now](#) and the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) to encourage parents to talk with their children early and often about tough issues like [sex](#), [HIV/AIDS](#), [violence](#), and [alcohol](#) and [drug abuse](#).

The National [Institute of Mental Health](#) and the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) have information and resources on child and adolescent mental health.

[The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) has information on safety recalls, and safety tips for children riding in motor vehicles, walking, biking, playing outside, waiting at school bus stops, and more.

Promoting the health of babies, children, and adults,
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Department of Health and Human Services

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Substance Abuse Prevention



The use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs is one of the biggest temptations facing young people today. As a parent, you are your child's best protection against drug use. You can start by telling your children that you expect them not to use drugs and become informed yourself about drug use. This publication was written by the American Academy of Pediatrics to help you identify the warning signs of drug use and provides tips on how to help your child (especially during the preteen and teen years) say no to drugs.

Stages of drug use

Both casual drug use and addiction impact health, but it is important for parents to know the difference. The same pattern of use and abuse exists for alcohol as with other drugs, such as marijuana or cocaine. The following is how experts explain the stages of alcohol or drug use:

Stage	Description
Abstinence	No use.
Experimentation	The first 1 or 2 times your child drinks alcohol or uses drugs. Children at this stage are curious about what it feels like to be drunk or high.
Non-problematic use	Repeated drug use in social situations without associated problems. Children at this stage are using in order to have fun with friends.
Problem use	Drug use for purposes other than recreation or drug use associated with a single problem, such as to deal with tension with parents or a school suspension. Children at this stage have begun to use in order to help them manage their emotions.
Abuse	Drug use that has a negative impact on daily functioning or that is associated with recurrent and significant risks and problems. Children at this stage have experienced problems because of their drug use but continue to use anyway.
Dependence	Loss of control over use. Children at this stage have developed a compulsion to use and no longer can simply decide to "just say no" or "stop using any time they wish."

How can I tell if my child or teen is using drugs?

Certain symptoms and behaviors are warning signs for drug use. But keep in mind they may also indicate other problems, such as depression. Look for

- Alcohol, smoke, or other chemical odors on your child's or their friends' breath or clothing
- Obvious intoxication, dizziness, or bizarre behavior
- Changes in dress and grooming
- Changes in choice of friends
- Frequent arguments, sudden mood changes, and unexplained violent actions
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Loss of interest in usual activities or hobbies
- School problems like declining or failing grades, poor attendance, and recent discipline problems
- Trauma or frequent injuries
- Runaway and delinquent behavior
- Depressed mood or talk about depression or suicide; suicide attempts

Teens will try to hide, disguise, or downplay alcohol or other drug use, so you must learn to recognize the signs of abuse and stay on top of things. Also, trust your instincts. If you suspect a problem, talk with your teen, ask questions, and speak with a health professional about your concerns.

Remember that your child's doctor has the knowledge and experience to help you find out if your child has a drug or alcohol problem and how to help your child.

What you can do

The following is what you can do to help your child say no to drugs:

- **Talk with your children about drugs.** Young people who do not know the facts about drugs may try them just to see what they are like. After you become informed, talk with your children about drugs and their harmful effects. Use current magazine articles or news reports, as well as TV or movie scenes, to bring up the topic and make a quick point. Try to get your children to share any questions and concerns they have. Be sure to really listen; do not lecture or do all the talking. Ask your children what they think about drug use and its consequences.
- **Help your children handle peer pressure.** Peers and friends can strongly influence teens to try drugs. As a parent, your influence can be just as strong in helping them be independent and resist unhealthy peer pressure. Tell them that it is OK to say no and mean it. They can try saying, "I need all the brain cells I have to make it through this school year," or "I would get in a lot of trouble if my parents ever found out," or they can try saying, "No, that's not for me," and leave to do something else. Practice these and other responses with your children. If a friend is

offering drugs, it may be harder to say no. Encourage your child to suggest other things to do with that friend. This shows that they are rejecting the drug, not the friend.

- **Help your children deal with emotions.** During the teen years, many young people face strong emotions for the first time. These new feelings can be hard to cope with, and your child may sometimes get depressed or anxious and possibly turn to drugs to try to escape such feelings and forget problems. It is important to talk with your children about any concerns and problems they are facing. Explain that everyone has these feelings at times. Everyone must learn how to cope with feelings and face their stressors in ways that are healthy and help them get through their problems. Assure them that everything has an upside, and things often do not stay "bad" for very long. Point out that even after using drugs, the same problems and hassles are still going to be there.
- **Boost their self-confidence.** It is often overlooked how important it is to notice and frequently praise others' positive qualities. Encourage your child to set goals, make personal decisions to achieve them, and actively work toward these goals. With each success, your children will gain more confidence. Applaud effort as well as success. As your children become more responsible, you should still provide guidance, emotional support, and security when needed. Becoming responsible also means facing the results of one's actions—good or bad. Making mistakes is a normal part of growing up, so try not to be too critical when your child makes a mistake.
- **Instill strong values in your children.** Teach your children the values that are important to your family. Also teach them to think of these values when deciding what is right and wrong. Explain that these are the standards your family lives by, despite what other people are doing.
- **Be a good role model.** As a parent, your actions often speak louder than words. You should use alcohol only in moderation and avoid using tobacco and drugs. You should not drink and drive or ride with a driver who has been drinking. Have a safety plan to pick up a teen in an unsafe situation, like if they end up at a party where drugs are being used. Make a stand against drug issues—your children will listen. You are the best role model for your family, so show them how to have fun without using drugs.
- **Encourage healthy ways to have fun.** Young people are always looking for ways to have fun. They can also get bored easily. Drugs offer what seems to be a carefree high with little or no effort or consequences. Help your child understand this myth. Encourage interests in different hobbies, clubs, sports, or other activities. Look for healthy ways to reduce boredom and too much free time. Take an active interest in what is important to your children. Plan interesting activities together as a family, and have fun!

About teen confidentiality

All teens should be screened for alcohol and other drug use as part of routine medical care. Your child's doctor will want to ask questions about alcohol in private in order to get honest answers. If your child does report alcohol use, the doctor will determine whether your child needs very brief advice, a return visit, or a referral to a specialist. Every doctor will have his or her own policy about what information must be shared with a parent and what will stay confidential (meaning stay between the patient and the doctor), but most doctors will protect a teen's confidentiality if they believe that the teen's drug use is not an immediate safety risk to the child or others. It is important for you to respect the doctor's decisions about confidentiality in order to encourage your child to have an open and honest discussion with the doctor.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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A Parent's Guide to Teen Parties

As a parent, you know the importance of your teen's social life and that parties are a way to socialize and relax. But an unsupervised or poorly planned party can result in unwanted or even tragic consequences. However, parental responsibility is the key to a fun and safe party.

The following is important information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about teen parties.

Facts about teen parties

- **Guest list.** When a teen plans a party, news spreads very quickly via social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter. Because of these new media, teen parties can grow too large for parents to control.
- **Time and place.** Teen parties often start late at night and move from house to house.

Facts about alcohol and drugs

Teens often expect alcohol and marijuana at parties. Some parents believe that it is better to allow teens to drink in their home so they can keep them safe. While this idea may be well intentioned, it is simply misguided. Parents cannot keep impaired teens safe.

Alcohol and other drugs impair judgment. Teens are more likely to have sex, be involved in a violent incident, or suffer an injury after using drugs or alcohol. All too frequently teens die from violence, unintentional injuries, or overdoses related to alcohol and other drugs.

Alcohol affects teens differently than adults. For example, compared with adults, teens are more likely to remain awake, to wander about, or to drive a car while having a much greater degree of mental impairment.

What parents need to know

Communication and honesty are important to keep your teen safe. Teens whose parents talk with them regularly about drugs and alcohol are 42% less likely to use substances than those whose parents don't. Tell your teens that you expect them not to use alcohol or other drugs at parties.

Parent networking is the best prevention tool to combat underage drinking. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents. If your teen is planning on going to a party, call the parents to ensure that they will be home and that they will not allow drugs or alcohol. If this is not possible, don't let your teen go.

Parents are legally responsible for anything that happens to a minor who has been served alcohol or other drugs in their home. If anyone brings alcohol or other drugs to your home, be prepared to contact their parents. And if someone comes to your home already intoxicated, make sure that they get home safely. Help your teen feel responsible for this as well.

Parents may be criminally or civilly liable if...

- Alcohol is provided to a minor at a party they have organized.
- Someone's property is damaged.
- Someone is injured.
- Someone leaves and gets into a car accident and/or injures someone else.
- Someone dies.
- Understand the local laws about alcohol and other drugs. Laws about alcohol and drug use vary from state to state, so make sure you know what the laws are in your state.

If you are hosting a teen party...

- ☐ **Plan in advance.** Go over party plans with your teen. Encourage your teen to plan non-alcohol-related group activities or games.
- ☐ **Keep parties small.** Ten to 15 teens for each adult. Make sure at least one adult is present at all times. Ask other parents to come over to help you if you need it.
- ☐ **Set a guest list.** The party should be for invited guests only. No "crashers" allowed. This will help avoid the "open party" situation.
- ☐ **Set starting and ending times for the party.** Check local curfew laws to determine an ending time.
- ☐ **Set party "rules" and your expectations.** Discuss them with your teen before the party. Rules should include the following:
 - o No tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.
 - o No one can leave the party and then return.
 - o Lights are left on at all times.
 - o Certain rooms of the house are off-limits.
- ☐ **Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages available.** Also, put your alcohol and any prescription or over-the-counter medicines in a locked cabinet.
- ☐ **Be there, but not square.** Pick out a spot where you can see what is going on without being in the way. You can also help serve snacks and beverages.

If your teen is going to a party...

- ☐ **Know where your teen is going and how long he will be there.** Have the phone number and address of the party. Ask your teen to call you if the location of the party changes. Be sure to let your teen know where you will be during the party.
- ☐ **Call the parent of the party host** to make sure a parent will be home the entire time and supervising the party. Make sure that tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs will not be allowed.
- ☐ **Talk with your teen beforehand** about how to handle a situation where alcohol is available at a party.

- ☐ **Make sure your teen has a way to get to and from the party.** Make it easy for your teen to leave a party by making it clear that he can call at any time for a ride home. Discuss why he might need to make such a call. Remind your teen NEVER to ride home with a driver who has been drinking or using other drugs.
- ☐ **Be up to greet your teen when he comes home.** This can be a good way to check the time and talk about the evening.
- ☐ If your teen is **staying overnight** at a friend's house after the party, verify this arrangement with the friend's parents and that they will be home.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

The AAP Committee on Adolescence and AAP Section on Adolescent Health would like to thank the AAP Committee on Substance Abuse and AAP NY Chapter 2 Committee on Adolescence for their assistance in developing this publication.

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Talking With Your Young Child About Sex



Children begin learning about sex and sexuality as soon as they are able to view, listen, and sense the world around them. As your children grow and develop, they may giggle with friends about "private parts," share "dirty" jokes, and look up taboo words in the dictionary. Their curiosity is natural, and children of all ages have questions.

As a parent, you may not feel comfortable talking about sex, or you may not know how to respond to questions about sex. This publication was written by the American Academy of Pediatrics to offer you guidance on how to talk with your children about sex.

You are the best teacher

Your children will learn many things about the world from friends, movies, TV, music, books, magazines, and the Internet. However, when it comes to something as important as sex and sexuality, nothing can replace the influence of a parent.

Talking about sex and sexuality gives you a chance to share your values and beliefs with your children. Sometimes the topic or the questions may seem embarrassing, but your children need to know there is always a reliable, honest source they can turn to for answers—you.

You can teach your children about relationships, love, commitment, and respect. When your children feel loved and respected by you, they are more likely to turn to you for answers and advice. Giving advice and teaching your children to make wise choices is one of your most important jobs as a parent.

Teachable moments

You can find *teachable moments* in everyday events to teach your children about topics related to sex. For example, talk about body parts and what's "private" during bath time. A pregnancy or birth in the family is a good time to discuss how babies are conceived and born. Watching TV with your children may also be a good time to discuss an on-screen relationship.

Teachable moments can happen anywhere and anytime. Use them when they happen. You don't need to make a speech. First, find out what your children already know. Let your children guide the talk and ask questions. Some children may not ask for information if they think you might be uneasy with it. Others might test you by asking embarrassing questions.

When your children begin to ask questions, the following might make it easier for both of you:

- Talk openly, and let your children know they can ask you about anything.
- Don't laugh or giggle, even if the question is cute. Your children might feel ashamed if you laugh.
- Try not to appear overly embarrassed or serious about the matter.
- Be brief. Answer in simple terms. Your 4-year-old doesn't need to know the details of intercourse.
- Be honest. Use proper names for all body parts.

- See if your children want or need to know more. Follow up your answers with, "Does that answer your question?"
- Listen to your children's responses and reactions.
- Be prepared to repeat yourself.

If you are uneasy talking about sex or answering certain questions, be honest about that too. You may want to ask a relative, a close family friend, or your children's doctor to help explain things.

Questions, questions, questions

The questions your children ask and the answers that are appropriate to give will depend on each child's age and ability to understand. Following are common questions and some of the issues for different age groups.

Preschool children

"How did I get in your tummy?"

"Where was I before I got in your tummy?"

"How did I get out?"

"Where do babies come from?"

"How come girls don't have a penis?"

18 months to 3 years of age—Children in this age group begin to learn about their own body. It is important to teach your children the proper names for body parts. Making up names for body parts may give the idea that there is something bad about the proper name. Also, teach your children which parts are private (parts covered by a bathing suit).

4 to 5 years of age—Children in this age group may begin to show an interest in basic sexuality, both their own and that of the opposite sex. Children may also touch their own genitals and may even show an interest in the genitals of other children. These are signs of normal interest. However, children need to learn what is all right to do and what is not. Setting limits to exploration is really a family matter. You may decide to teach your children the following:

- Interest in genital organs is healthy and natural.
- Nudity and sexual play in public are not all right.
- No other person, including even close friends and relatives, may touch your child's "private parts." The exceptions are doctors and nurses during physical exams with the parent's permission, and parents when they are trying to find the cause of any pain in the genital area.

By the time children are school-aged, they should know the following:

- Proper names of body parts (including the womb or uterus where a baby grows—not mom's tummy)
- Functions of each
- Physical differences between boys and girls

School-aged children

"How old do girls have to be before they can have a baby?"

"Why do boys get erections?"

"What is a period?"

"How do people have sexual intercourse?"

"Why do some men like other men?"

5 to 7 years of age—Children in this age group learn more about how people get along with each other. They may become interested in what takes place sexually between adults. Their questions will become more complex as they try to understand the connection between sexuality and making babies. They may come up with their own explanations about how the body works or where babies come from. They may also turn to their friends for answers.

It is important to help your children understand sexuality in a healthy way. Lessons and values they learn at this age will stay with them as adults. It will encourage meaningful adult relationships later.

8 to 9 years of age—Children in this age group probably already have developed a sense of right and wrong. They are able to understand that sex is something that happens between 2 people who love each other. They may become interested in how mom and dad met and fell in love. As questions about romance, love, and marriage arise, they may also ask about homosexual relationships. Use this time to discuss your family's thoughts about homosexuality. Explain that liking or loving someone does not depend on the person's gender and is different from liking someone sexually.

At this age, children will be going through many changes that will prepare them for puberty. Teaching your children to be sexually responsible is one of the most important lessons.

As children approach puberty, they should know about

- The body parts related to sex and their functions
- How babies are conceived and born
- Puberty and how the body will change
- Menstruation (Boys and girls can benefit from this information.)
- Sexual intercourse, including information about why people choose to wait to have sex at a later age or until married
- Birth control
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), how they are spread, and how to protect themselves
- Masturbation
- Homosexuality
- Family and personal guidelines

For more information, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics Web site, www.aap.org. You also may find books on talking to your child about sexuality at your local library or bookstore.

About masturbation

Masturbation is a part of childhood sexuality that many parents find difficult to discuss. Up to the age of 5 or 6 years, it is quite common. Around age 6, children become more socially aware and may feel embarrassed about touching themselves in public. Make sure your children understand that masturbation is a private activity, not a public one. Masturbation in private may continue and is normal.

There are times when frequent masturbation can point to a problem. It could be a sign that a child is under a lot of stress or not receiving enough attention at home. In rare cases, it could even be a sign of sexual abuse. Some sexually abused children become overly interested in their sexuality. If masturbation becomes a problem, talk with your child's doctor. For most children, masturbation is nothing to worry about. It is normal.

Sex and the media

Media entertain, educate, and inform. But some messages may not be what we want children to learn.

American media today often portray sexual images and suggestive sexual content. In fact, the average young viewer is exposed to more than 14,000 sexual references each year. Only a small amount of what is seen in the media shows responsible sexual behavior or gives correct information about abstinence (not having sex), birth control, or the risks of pregnancy and STIs.

Media in any format can have a positive or negative effect on your children. This makes it important for you to know what your children are listening to or watching. Many lyrics can be obtained online in case you need help figuring out the exact words. Watch TV or go to the movies with your children—it can be a great starting point for your next talk about sex.

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deciding to wait



No matter what you've heard, read, or seen, not everyone your age is having sex, including oral sex and intercourse. In fact, more than half of all teens choose to wait until they're older to have sex. If you have already had sex but are unsure if you should again, then wait before having sex again.

New feelings

Being physically attracted to another person and trying to figure out how to deal with these feelings is perfectly normal. Kissing and hugging are often accompanied by really intense sexual feelings. These feelings may tempt you to "go all the way."

Before things go too far, try asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I really want to have sex?
- Is this person pressuring me to have sex?
- Am I ready to have sex?
- What will happen after I have sex with this person?

Remember, you can show how you feel about someone without having sex (being abstinent) with him or her.

Can you be sexual without having sex?

Yes. Being sexual can mean

- Spending romantic time together
- Holding hands, kissing, or cuddling

Are you ready?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How do you feel when you are with this person?
- Is this person kind and caring?
- Does this person *respect* you and your opinions?
- Have you talked together about whether to have sex?
- Have you talked together about using some form of protection like condoms to prevent infections, and using condoms or other forms of protection to prevent pregnancy?
- Will you stay together even if one of you does not want to have sex?
- Do you know if your partner has *ever had sex with other people*?
- Do you feel pressured to have sex just to please your partner?

If you and your partner find it hard to talk about sex, it might be a sign that you are not ready to have sex. Open and honest communication is important in any relationship, especially one that involves sex.

Know the risks

It's normal for teens to be curious about sex, but deciding to have sex is a big step.

Sex does increase your chances of becoming pregnant, becoming a teen parent, and getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI), and it may affect the way you feel about yourself or how others feel about you.

Some things to think about before you have sex are

- What would *your parents* say if you had sex?
- Are you ready to be a parent?
- Could you handle being told that you have an STI?
- Do you know where to go for birth control methods?
- How would you feel if your partner tells you *it's over after you have sex*?
- How would you feel if your partner tells people at school the two of you had sex?
- How would you handle feeling guilty, scared, or sad because you had sex?

Set your limits

If you don't want to have sex, set limits before things get too serious. Never let anyone talk you into doing something you don't want to do. Boys and girls need to understand that forcing someone to have sex is wrong.

Stick by your decision

If you don't know what to say, here are some suggestions.

- "I like you a lot, but I'm just not ready to have sex."
- "You're really fun to be with, and I wouldn't want to ruin our relationship with sex."
- "You're a great person, but sex isn't how I prove I like someone."
- "I'd like to wait until I'm older before I make the decision to have sex."

Remember, "no" means "no"—no matter how far you go. If you feel things are going too far sexually, tell your partner to stop.

Better safe than sorry

If you choose to wait to have sex, try to avoid

- Being alone with the same person too often. Spending time with your other friends is important too.
- Giving someone the wrong idea. Stick to your limits. It's also not a good idea for you to kiss a lot or go too far sexually if you don't really want to have sex.

- Using alcohol or drugs. Both of these *affect your judgment*, which may make it hard to stick to your decision not to have sex.
- Giving in to the pressure. It may be tempting to keep up with the crowd, but keep in mind that they may not be telling the truth.

Why wait?

People who wait until they are older to have sex usually find out that it's

- More *special*
- More satisfying
- Less risky to their health
- Easier to act responsibly and take precautions to avoid infections and pregnancy
- More accepted by others

Be patient. At some point, you will be ready for sex. Move at your own pace, not someone else's.

The persons whose photographs are depicted in this publication are professional models. They have no relation to the issues discussed. Any characters they are portraying are fictional.

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